

# JCSA TELECONFERENCE—2001

## Gender Equality in Jewish Communal Service: Toward a National Action Agenda

*The Jewish Communal Service Association, in cooperation with the World Council of Jewish Communal Service, presented JCSA Teleconference—2001, entitled Gender Equality in Jewish Communal Service: Toward a National Action Agenda.*

*An estimated 1,300 professionals in 34 communities throughout North America participated in the interactive telecast on the United Jewish Communities Satellite Communications Network on March 27, 2001. Many of the sites conducted discussions on local aspects of the issue of gender equality in conjunction with the broadcast, utilizing a questionnaire and other materials developed for that purpose by JCSA.*

*The Association is pleased to acknowledge the support received for the program from United Jewish Communities, The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, the Jewish Women's Foundation of New York, and the United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, PA.*

*The following article is based on the broadcast. It has been edited for continuity and to conform to Journal style.*

### BACKGROUND

DR. RON B. MEIER

*Executive Vice President, UJA Federation of Bergen County and North Hudson, NJ; President, JCSA*

The teleconference is one component in the Jewish Communal Service Association's ongoing effort to foster gender equality in the field of Jewish communal service.

The issue first received serious attention in 1977 with the publication of the findings of a precedent-shattering JCSA survey of 319 Jewish agencies employing more than 2,200 professionals. This groundbreaking study clearly demonstrated the underutilization of women in the field and opened a public dialogue on the issue.

In 1979, JCSA marshalled the support of many agencies and leading professionals in the development of a *Proclamation of Equal Professional Opportunities for Women in Jewish Communal Service* that was widely publicized. The survey and the declaration firmly placed the issue of gender equality on the Jewish communal agenda.

JCSA has continued to pursue equal gender access to jobs, salaries commensurate with job title, and entry into the executive

suites in Jewish agencies. The Association has done so through its Committee on Women, periodic surveys of the field, articles in the *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, and other forums.

Although some halting progress toward full gender equality has been made during the quarter-century since JCSA first surfaced the issue, it is clear that as a field and as a continental community much more remains to be accomplished.

### INTRODUCTION

Co-Chairs, JCSA Teleconference on Gender Equality Planning Committee

SANDRA LIEF GARRETT

*Executive Director, Jewish Women's Foundation of New York*

and

HOWARD M. RIEGER

*President, United Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh, PA*

The goal of the Jewish Communal Service Association is to enhance the quality of pro-

fessional service to the Jewish community, thus contributing to the continuity and enrichment of Jewish life.

There is an urgent need to recruit and retain highly skilled and well-qualified Jewish communal service professionals and to ensure their advancement based on merit. This is particularly true today as the Jewish community is engaged in an effort to strengthen and revitalize itself.

Therefore, any impediment to our ability to attract and advance qualified women in the profession based solely on their talent and ability represents a serious problem. Such behavior is a liability to the profession. It is a barrier to the attainment of a rejuvenated faith community, particularly one that highly values justice and fair-mindedness.

The commitment to gender equality requires adherence to the "Three Rs": Renewal, Reputation, and Revolution.

#### RENEWAL

Our community is engaged in bringing about a Jewish renaissance and renewal. To do so we must draw on our greatest resource—our people. The task requires the commitment and participation of dedicated volunteer leadership in concert with talented, high-quality professionals. Thus, recruitment and retention of skilled practitioners, regard-

less of gender, are critically important.

#### REPUTATION

We will only achieve this renewal if we ensure that professional advancement is based on merit, not gender. In this era of great employment opportunities, would you recommend that a woman of exceptional talent take a position where her advancement may be blocked because she is a female? We must become an employer of choice for both women and men seeking to apply their talents and energies to the enhancement of the Jewish community.

#### REVOLUTION

The glacial pace of progress on the issue of gender equality may lead some to think that overthrowing the existing system is the only path to change. Rather, let us think of revolution as the fundamental changes in thinking and acting required to bring about a paradigm of equal opportunities for all who wish to work in and for our community.

Dr. Audrey S. Weiner, Executive Vice President/COO of the Jewish Home and Hospital of New York, has for several years conducted research, written extensively, and spoken at national and international forums on the subject of gender equality in our profes-



*Sandra Lief Garrett and Howard M. Rieger*

sion. She recently summarized why this issue must be atop our continental Jewish agenda: "By excluding women consistently... we are denying our communities at least half of the leadership they will both need and deserve."

## PRESENTATIONS

### **Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community**

SHIFRA BRONZNICK

*Partner, Bronznick Jacoby LLC, NY*

Should the advancement of women be a central concern for our community? Yes! As a leading CEO once said, "My company's most valuable assets walk out the door every evening."

Those of us who try to retain or recruit excellent staff know that our Jewish organizations are increasingly competing for qualified professionals with the corporate sector and with other not-for-profit institutions.

Jewish communal executives may often feel besieged by conflicting priorities, but our success in meeting those challenges depends on making our agencies magnets for talent. That is why it makes good business sense to support efforts to advance women in our community.

But to shatter the "glass ceiling" for women professionals in the Jewish communal world, we first must debunk three widely held myths.

### **MYTH #1—THERE IS NO "GLASS CEILING" IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY.**

Jewish women are a powerful force in the Jewish world, both as volunteers and professionals. They are better educated as a group than any other female population in the United States and well positioned to attain top executive posts in the organized Jewish community.

Is this true?

When we recently surveyed the national scene—the organizations that are the Jewish public face to the world—from United Jewish Communities to coordinating bodies such as the Conference of Presidents, from our lobbying groups to resettlement agencies, virtually all are headed by men. Men lead our major defense organizations, with one recent exception. So too, the vast majority of our prestigious philanthropic foundations are led by men.

The many national organizations that shape the Jewish agenda in education, community building, renaissance, and renewal—organizations such as the JCC Association, JESNA, CLAL, Hillel, and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture—all have male CEOs. And while the religious denominations from Orthodox to Reconstructionists are divided by many profound differences, they share common ground in that not one of their institutions—congregational unions, rabbinic associations, or seminaries—is led by a woman.

In 1994, Ma'yan, the Jewish Women's Project of the JCC of New York, commissioned Drs. Bethamie Horowitz, Pearl Beck, and Charles Kadushin to analyze the status of women on national boards. Thirty national organizations responded to a survey question on professional compensation. More than half had no women in the five top salaried positions. This is further evidence that when we look to the "pipeline" for upcoming women, we find a serious leak.

The executives of the 19 largest federations are convened regularly, and their meetings are very influential in determining the national Jewish communal priorities. Once again, these large-city federation executives are all men. In fact, of the largest 40 federations, only the Rhode Island body is headed by a woman.

There are sectors of the Jewish communal field that have achieved a genuine balance between male and female CEOs. Those are our vocational and family service agencies, and local community relations councils. Leaders in these arenas often report that their

difficulty, is not recruitment of women, but finding the top executives of either gender. This is due in part by being at the low end of the compensation scale.

Overall, our experience shows the frequent correlation between the size of a local agency's budget and the gender of its executive. With some exceptions, men lead our largest agencies. In other words, the numbers demonstrate that the glass ceiling is firmly in place.

**MYTH #2—WOMEN ARE MAKING GREAT STRIDES ELSEWHERE AND WILL INEVITABLY ADVANCE IN THE JEWISH COMMUNITY.**

This myth reflects the complacency that has lulled our communal leadership into waiting passively for the gender imbalance to correct itself. Rather than being comforted by women's progress in other areas, we should be troubled by the stark contrast between the slow advancement of women at the top of the Jewish world and women's leadership in other spheres.

In business, government, and the not-for-profit sector, women have made significant strides. In the not-for-profit field, women have broken through as CEOs at some of our country's most significant institutions, from the American Red Cross to Brown University, from the American Museum of Natural History to the University of Pennsylvania. Fifty-one percent of foundation CEOs are women, doubling their numbers since 1982. Women head such prestigious foundations as Ford and the Pew Charitable Trust, as well as the world's largest philanthropy, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In the corporate world, even though a glass ceiling still exists, there are increasing numbers of powerful and visible women in the highest echelon of every industry and at such companies as Hewlett Packard, Kraft, Sara Lee and Avon.

Let us be clear. The Jewish community is lagging behind its counterparts, who are in fact its competitors for talented and excellent executive leaders.

**MYTH #3—THE NUMBERS OF WOMEN TRAINING FOR JEWISH COMMUNAL SERVICE WILL EVENTUALLY REMEDY THE GENDER IMBALANCE AT THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL.**

It is true that more of our training programs are filled with women. In rabbinical schools, women now comprise 50 percent of the students, as well as among the latest group of Jewish Theological Seminary-Columbia School of Social Work students. Women overwhelmingly attend the Hornstein Program at Brandeis University. The Wexner Foundation, too, has seen a dramatic rise in female fellows. Will these programs succeed in grooming women for top organizational posts?

However, we find that women who attain top positions in the national Jewish world are rarely graduates of Jewish Theological Seminary or Hebrew Union College, nor have they worked their way up through the Jewish communal ranks. Frequently, they come from outside the field.

Catalyst, a not-for-profit organization that is an authority on women in the private sector, has learned from decades of experience that it is difficult for women to be recommended or recruited for top positions if they do not penetrate the circle of male executives and participate in their formal and informal gatherings. Being closed out of this inner circle also makes it more difficult for women to find mentors who can provide access to concrete career opportunities. The problem is compounded by the tendency of search firms to consult this same influential group—from which women are excluded—for referrals for high-level positions.

It is no coincidence that when we look at the professional backgrounds of the handful of women who have been selected as executive directors of national agencies, the credentials on their CVs invariably read: MacKinsey and Company, Consultants; U.S. Department of Transportation; Department of Health and Human Services; National Endowment for the Humanities; Hollywood Political Action Coalition; National Down Syndrome

Society; Manhattan Borough President's Office; and The Children's Defense Fund.

This consistent pattern demonstrates that the only way to break through the Jewish glass ceiling is to climb through a non-Jewish window. This leads to two possible—and equally troubling—conclusions.

One, is that the only way a woman's expertise, talent, and leadership become visible is when she develops her credentials in a non-Jewish sphere because that context is more conducive to showcasing women's potential. Or, alternatively, perhaps women who are ambitious leave the Jewish community for more promising fields of endeavor.

Smart business leaders have learned that staff turnover costs represent more than 110 percent of an employee's annual salary. Add to this financial price tag the fact that we cannot afford to wait for people from other fields to join us. This is especially true because few people are entering the profession from the outside. On the contrary, the explosion of opportunities for Jewish professionals at a time of unprecedented choice is creating an exodus of talent from the Jewish community, both women and men.

The increasing difficulty in attracting and retaining top professionals has finally galvanized the community into an understanding that we must take a hard look at each of our institutions and find a way to link the search for gender equity with the pursuit of greater organizational vitality. That means looking at how to find talented women and how to make jobs in the Jewish community more appealing so as to attract more quality professionals.

So, how can we break the glass ceiling?

When the accounting firm Deloitte and Touche instituted a major initiative aimed at retaining and promoting women as a "business imperative of the 90s," the result was a dramatic increase in partnership promotion rates for women from 5 percent in 1991 to 14 percent in 1999.

The business community has undertaken many such initiatives, testing different strategies in a wide range of settings. In analyzing

the common characteristics of these successful initiatives we found that change requires focus, accountability, and allocation of resources, all anchored by the visible and sustained commitment of the organization's top leadership.

In an extraordinary and useful article by Debra E. Meyerson and Joyce K. Fletcher, entitled *A Modest Manifest for Shattering the Glass Ceiling*, the authors suggest that instead of gender inequity we think about height discrimination. Imagine a world where short people rule. Finally, tall people get fed up and call for change.

The first stage of trying to rectify things is to teach tall people to act like short people; the second stage is to fix some of the structural barriers that get in tall people's way; the third stage is to celebrate the very special differences of tall people.

The paradigm is quite like the way enlightened companies responded to women's advancement—first teaching women to be more like men, then trying to remove barriers by establishing a "mommy track" or family-friendly policies and finally emphasizing women's special talents like their ability to motivate teams and their tendency to be collaborative rather than competitive.

These well-meaning efforts have allowed individual women to enjoy more access and more opportunity—what they have not done is remove the glass ceiling. To do so requires a willingness to examine the norms of our organizations and decide which ones need to be challenged and changed.

In the fourth approach, we try to bring men and women together to diagnose the inequities rooted in the paths of organization. The diagnosis is followed by serious, sustained efforts to reinvent the system, through a series of small, incremental "wins" that benefit everyone.

For example, an organization was having difficulty recruiting women. They noted that their interviewers—all male—bonded quickly and comfortably with the male applicants in interviews lasting only 20 minutes. When the interviews were extended to 45 minutes and

conducted in a less linear manner, the organization was able to recruit many excellent female candidates.

In fact, they became known as an outstanding place for women to work and thus began attracting more and better female candidates. I suspect that they ultimately became a magnet for great talent in general because by making the interview process less linear they expanded the recruitment pool to a variety of excellent but less obvious candidates.

In another situation, a company had trouble retaining women executives. After much discussion, they found there was a problem around "unbounded time"—meetings that were scheduled without sufficient notice or that ended later than scheduled.

These impromptu meetings—that had no end time—were problematic for the women, who worked hard but were forced to juggle more non-work responsibilities than did the men. Therefore, disciplines around schedule issues had a greater impact on them.

I raise the problem of unbounded time with some trepidation because this issue cuts to the core of who we are as a community—and what we value—but it is very much a double-edged sword that has been used to explain away an inexcusable lack of opportunity for leadership positions for women.

Many male executives have also been caught in this time bind, but it is considered inappropriate for them, no matter how burned out they may feel, to do more than joke about their arduous workload. Thus, the issue of work/life balance remains more closely associated with women.

In actuality, research shows that two-thirds of the housework and domestic responsibility are carried out by women—raising children, caring for an elderly parent or a sick aunt, or tending to the family's Jewish life and social life. That is why I am not surprised that some young women executives sometimes say: "Please don't fight for me to get those top jobs. They are terrible."

But here is the good news for women and for the Jewish community. The fact that few women are exempt from juggling work and

life will force them, and in turn force the community, to begin a critical conversation about what we want our Jewish communal leaders to embody. Challenging the established norm of workaholic as a prerequisite for Jewish executive posts might ultimately allow us to work smarter instead of harder and to be more thoughtful about what we value and how we lead.

In a sense, the discoveries we make about the ways to structure executive roles to attract the best women for top positions will be the incubator for prototypes that will help us in all of our talent recruitment and retention efforts. At the same time we must be focused, creative, and assertive in specific efforts to advance women within every Jewish organization.

That is why I am pleased by the opportunity to help launch a new project and the first initiative of the Trust for Jewish Philanthropy, entitled *Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community*. The goals of the project are ambitious. We want to identify, attract, advance, and retain women in executive and management positions. We plan to shatter that glass ceiling and make the Jewish community a better place for everyone to work.

The initial thrust of the project will be to forge a new consensus among leaders of Jewish organizations about the realities of gender inequity, and the need to remove barriers for women and create serious opportunities for their advancement. The project will consult with organizational professionals and volunteers throughout the country, and form several pilot groups of selected Jewish organizations that will commit themselves to experimenting with concrete strategies for women's advancement.

The pilot participants will test alternative approaches, monitor their progress, and share the results throughout the community. We hope many organizations will choose to be part of this communal laboratory for women's advancement and organizational change.

We will establish data collection programs to review and analyze the status of women

professionals in the community. We have learned that what we measure is what we value, and that such measuring in and of itself begins creating real accountability for tangible progress.

Later this year, the project will also launch a Talent Bank that will identify, showcase, and promote promising women professionals who are capable of assuming top management and executive posts in our institutions. If initiatives like *Advancing Women* succeed, and I believe they will, we can begin the difficult task of transforming the Jewish world.

I want to close by saying I am confident and optimistic. Our community has built an extensive and effective network of agencies that have met myriad challenges with creativity and competence. We have not closed the gender gap yet, because until now we didn't realize that we had to do it. Now we know.

There are many tools to help us succeed. But there is one tool that is not found in any consultant's head, corporate file, or academic research project. The most effective tool in shattering the glass ceiling is the one that each professional can bring to this process—a depth of commitment and a readiness to be a real catalyst for change.

#### A TOOL KIT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

MERYLE MAHRER KAPLAN, PH.D.  
*Director, Advisory Services, Catalyst, NY*

The issue of gender equality is important to Jewish agencies, organizations, and the community. I offer insights on this pressing issue and present concrete suggestions for bringing about greater equity, based on lessons learned through my association with and experiences at Catalyst.

Catalyst is a non-profit organization geared to advancing women in business and to dealing with diversity concerns in all kinds of organizations. Founded 38 years ago, Catalyst has a tremendous amount of experience understanding the status of women in workplaces.

Unfortunately, it is easy to relate the negative gender experiences in the business sector to those in Jewish communal service. Data about the status and experiences of women within Jewish professional organizations suggest that they parallel the experiences of women in the for-profit world. Women continue to be poorly represented at senior levels and subjected to stereotypes that limit career progress.

Equally troubling is that women describe workplaces that do not practice inclusion and effective team building. In many ways, the challenges that the Jewish community faces parallel those of other organizations, despite the fact that Jewish service organizations should be models of the ethics of equity and mutual support.

This article is organized into three areas:

1. *Barriers to women's advancement:* How can these barriers lead us to an understanding of the current situation?
2. *The organizational imperative to develop and retain a diverse talent pool:* Why must we listen to workers who are leaving and unhappy? At Catalyst we say that they are the "canaries in the mine"—they carry important messages about areas of concern within the workplace.
3. *Strategies for organizational change:* What can your organization do that is equitable for all employees—not only women—and builds organizational effectiveness.

#### BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT

There is a serious and pervasive "disconnect" between what women and men perceive in the workplace.

Catalyst conducted a major study of senior women who had advanced within Fortune 1000 companies and of the CEOs of those same companies. The 1996 survey, *Women in Corporate Leadership: Progress and Prospects*, clearly demonstrates the disconnect between what the CEOs viewed as barriers to

advancement and what the women themselves perceived.

CEOs saw experience as the issue that kept women from advancing:

- 82%: Lack of significant general management or line experience
- 64%: Not in the pipeline long enough

Women viewed stereotyping and exclusion as key barriers keeping them from attaining that experience:

- 52%: Male stereotyping and preconceptions
- 49%: Exclusion from informal networks
- 47%: Lack of general management or line experience

Women in this study, and in other work settings, repeatedly report that they deal with factors that many men often do not see or recognize. Our workplaces are often like high schools with an "old boys network in-group." This is no way to run a business, or a Jewish communal service organization.

It is important to remember what those in-group/out-groups felt like, regardless of where you personally did or did not fit in. The presence of an in-group encourages conformity. People are striving to fit in because insiders have the necessary information and are on the fast track (or the only track) to advancement.

At the same time, people worry about becoming outsiders and are forced to pay inordinate attention to politics. They do not take valuable risks or pay adequate attention to the full team. Many are uncomfortable and want to find a place where they belong and are taken seriously. A high school with an in-group is the antithesis of a dynamic team-based workplace.

Some of the JCSA survey data suggest that the old boys' network remains alive and well in your organizations. This is not good for any employee and no way to present the profession to the community.

Increasingly, people have a sense of

"what's wrong with this picture" when they see all men in leadership positions. It is not just women who are bothered. Many women donors and leaders in the Jewish community are put off, and their husbands are likely to be similarly concerned.

Further, Generation Xers, the young people who are key to the future health of the Jewish community, have grown up in a world in which men and women are friends and colleagues. They too will likely be turned off rather than inspired by Jewish organizations that do not share their sense of gender equity.

We want and need to present our organizations as "with it" and insightful. This cannot be accomplished if community members see the agencies as missing half of the talent pool and not "getting" the issues that half the population is addressing.

#### **THE ORGANIZATIONAL IMPERATIVE: THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER EQUITY**

Individual women have found ways to be successful and included within their organizations. However, individual strategies for success are not sufficient to deal with large-scale gender equity issues. These are systemic issues that are problems for an organization, affect the health of the workplace, and are injurious to the Jewish community.

At Catalyst, we refer to "the business case"—the case for organizational health. I urge that you develop a burning platform, your own sense of why equity is important in your organization. True gender diversity—diversity at all levels of your organization—will improve your agency's effectiveness.

Diversity and gender equality can accomplish the following objectives:

- *Fill hiring needs and build an effective workforce:* You want to be an employer of choice in what is a fierce competition for talent. You want to attract those high-contributing employees. You do not want to miss half the talent pool. In addition, you want to respond to your whole community and deepen community relationships; this

responsiveness is important for the development and delivery of effective services and for successful fundraising.

- *Spark innovation that can help you attract new interest:* A diverse workforce is a workforce that brainstorms and that can respond to issues effectively. A diverse workforce can play a true community leadership role and represent the full scope of your interests and activities.
- *Reduce turnovers:* An inclusive workforce does not systematically lose employees from particular groups. Many businesses have recognized that the cost of turnover is substantial. Ernst & Young, the accounting firm, estimates the cost at 150% the salary at a minimum. As you think about costs, include any replacement expenditures as well as the cost of jobs uncovered and learning curve time for new employees. Also consider the loss in client and community relationships and workplace morale.

### STRATEGIES FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Catalyst carefully studies how organizations make change, and we work with client organizations to develop effective change strategies. The following is an overview of our recommended process.

*First*, set up a leadership team, a diverse group of people of influence and insight to investigate and craft a strategy and spearhead change.

*Second*, investigate what is happening in your organization, and build a solid fact-base of information about how people feel about the situation. Look for any differences in the experiences of men and women and of any other meaningful subgroups of employees.

- Ask employees about their perceptions of the agency culture, their career expectations, what drives their intent to leave, how they balance their work and personal lives, and whether they think management is supportive and promotes diversity.

- Gather baseline human resources data in order to create a clear understanding of representation, hiring, and turnover patterns and to track the career patterns of men and women.
- Gather examples of success stories in your workplace (include stories of diverse teams and their outreach and creativity, success with work/life effectiveness, and advancement of a diverse population).
- Map the strengths and weaknesses of your current policies and practices.
- Solicit recommendations for practical solutions.

*Third*, distill this assessment into three or four areas of focus. Attention to too many goals at once can dilute energies and lead to a situation in which a variety of activities are treated as equally important. It is more effective to prioritize and identify those key issues that must be addressed.

*Fourth*, learn from leading solutions. Study "best practices" within your agency and partner organizations. Learn from businesses that have been addressing gender equality and diversity concerns. Brainstorm and review the suggestions that arise through your investigation. Consider the gap between these solutions and your current activities.

*Fifth*, design a strategy. With this fact-base, areas of focus, and understanding of possible solutions, you will be ready to design a strategy.

Think about the following:

- Your organization's priorities, issues and goals
- What would work for your organization: Respond to your needs and fit your resources
- What you are ready for: Infrastructure, leadership and employee support, and culture
- When changing readiness is the goal of your program: Address problematic stereotypes and inclusion issues

**Develop a Plan with These  
Six Building Blocks:**

1. Leadership support at every level: Grassroots efforts can be wonderful, but we are now talking about an institutional change initiative that is key to the well-being of your organization. Senior leadership support is essential.
2. Communication: Communication should include the "burning platform"—your clear sense of why the strategy is important to your organization; your vision and goals for the future; and a description of the strategic plan.
3. Recruitment strategies that will bring a full range of talent into your organization.
4. People development, advancement, and reward systems that are transparent and consistently applied, that take employees seriously, and that offer feedback, coaching, and assignments employees need.
5. Work/life supports and training for managers and employees to understand that work/life balance is of value to all employees, not just to women.
6. Diversity education and training to address inclusion issues and develop a common language and a shared sense of appropriate behaviors.

**Develop a Plan with "Mortar"**

These building blocks will not hold together as an effective strategy unless you track and measure what you are doing. Catalyst suggests the following:

- Establish accountability for managers and senior leadership. Include attention to gender equality in performance appraisals. Reward managers and senior leadership for successful attention to diversity issues in the same way that you would reward them for meeting fundraising objectives or any other key goals.
- Treat "listening systems" as an ongoing part of your activities—keep paying attention to employees' perceptions and the

recruitment/retention numbers in interviews tracked during your investigation. Develop surveys, program evaluation forms, focus groups, exit interviews, and other approaches to "hear" what employees are saying.

- Track the utilization and success of individual initiatives.
- Measure implementation and progress against your plan.

**CONCLUSION**

Increasing gender equality is an exciting and worthwhile way to strengthen an organization. We are not focusing on issues for individual women. Rather, we are looking to develop systems and approaches that include *all* employees in an effort to forge closer, more responsive community ties.

Develop a strategy for your organization. Select a small number of things to do, and do them fully and well.

Deloitte & Touche, the large accounting firm, did just this. It identified four key focuses, each with "quick hits" and longer-term activities:

1. Establishing senior leaders as champions of the advancing women initiative—with a high-level women's advisory council, a clear business case, and consistent and strong messages to the firm.
2. Promoting the idea of men and women as colleagues—with intensive, two-day training that began with senior managers and cascaded through the firm.
3. Enhancing career opportunities for women—with clear, consistent succession planning and high-potential programs in order to identify, develop, and retain talent.
4. Supporting and encouraging flexible work arrangements for all employees.

Deloitte & Touche started their efforts nine years ago. In their estimation, these initiatives saved a substantial amount of money in hiring and training costs and enabled them to grow faster than any of the

other large professional firms in the last several years. If accounting firms can reorganize and take these issues so seriously, so can you.

Professionals in Jewish communal service have developed successful campaigns for their agencies designed to address many different issues. You have benefitted from the involvement of volunteer leadership and have built excellent staffs that have a winning combination of talent and commitment.

Gender equality and diversity are key, positive elements of an effective organization. Draw upon your successes and experiences to create, implement, and actualize strategies for change.

## RESPONSES

### A PROFESSIONAL'S VIEW

JANET ENGELHART

*Executive Vice President, Jewish Federation of Rhode Island*

We are faced with the serious human resource challenge of recruiting and retaining qualified professionals. That critically important and difficult task is compounded by the

inequitable treatment of talented women. The depth of the challenge is underscored by the fact that I am the only woman to lead one of the 40 largest federations in North America.

Anecdotal information can often present new models of systemic change that our system clearly requires. Professional and personal experiences that led to my selection as Executive Vice President of the Jewish Federation of Rhode Island may therefore be instructive.

### PREPARATION FOR PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

First, I was selected to participate in the inaugural United Jewish Communities Mandel Executive Development program in 1995. The program included skills development and professional education. More importantly, it offered a network of peers with common goals, and a support system. Further, by virtue of participating in the program, I was perceived as a candidate for top positions and as a person who would work hard.

I urge that other executive development programs be instituted and made readily available to women, especially in view of the fact in my group of 21 Mandel "Fellows," 15 were indeed fellows.



*Shifra Bronznick and Meryle M. Kaplan, Ph.D.*

Second, I sought and received increasingly more difficult and high-profile assignments at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. In my final assignment, I was further motivated to succeed when volunteer leaders and agency executives questioned my ability to handle the difficult fiscal-related tasks involved because I was not one of the two top male professionals at the agency.

Third, I had a mentor who promoted and encouraged me and helped me develop my skills. He had the confidence and professional security to share with me some of his struggles in dealing with difficult volunteers, professionals, and community issues. How can we make it easier and more relevant to mentor women in a field dominated by men at the top?

#### OBSERVATIONS BASED ON EXPERIENCE

My twenty years in the field of Jewish communal service lead me to make several observations about the perception and treatment of women by other professionals and volunteer leaders.

Many senior volunteer leaders support women's advancement in the business arena, but find it difficult to accept this new model of leadership in the Jewish community. Although the federation system is consensus-driven, more status is frequently given to "power position" and "loudest voice," rather than to the "consensus-builder." I have worked diligently to integrate my natural consensus-building abilities with the occasional need for a strong, loud voice.

All women have experienced subtle—and not so subtle—hurdles in their professional lives. We are excluded from the important "old boys" network, yield to the loudest voice, and have known volunteer leaders who take special privileges, privileges they would not take with male professionals.

Despite the Jewish community's emphasis on family values, some leaders have problems allowing for an appropriate separation of a personal and professional life, placing added stress on family life. For these men and others, the "baby track" does not bode well for

professional advancement.

#### REACTIONS TO SELECTION

During the executive search process leading to my present position, I found that many of the volunteer leaders who interviewed me had preconceived notions about women and how they perform on the job. They assumed that as a woman, I would easily engage people and build a strong staff. Conversely, they assumed that I would find fundraising and approaching top donors difficult and would have trouble being tough when difficult decisions had to be made.

One senior volunteer leader, in a private conversation, said to me, "I guess you are really scared to take on a top position." I quickly disabused him of that idea. All new employees are tested at the outset, but can you imagine a volunteer asking a man if he was scared to accept a highly responsible position!

#### CONCLUSION

The Advancing Women's Program should strive to gain consensus about the realities of gender equality and its importance for the future. Such equality would free us all to truly develop our full capabilities, and thus strengthen the Jewish community we all have chosen to serve.

#### A VOLUNTEER LEADER'S VIEW

JOSEPH S. KAPLAN

*Partner, Ross and Hardies, NY; President of the Board, Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services, NY*

There is no question that gender inequality exists in organizational Jewish life. This unhappy fact is abundantly clear to me as a volunteer leader. These inequities exist despite recent advances by women professionals in our human services agencies, the Conservative and Reform rabbinate, and an increasing role for women in Orthodox higher

educational institutions in Israel. However, the progress also denotes that there is a fertile field for greater improvement and gender equality.

To overcome these inequities we must analyze the situation carefully and then identify and solve the various problems through a step-by-step approach. This is not a prescription for moving slowly—it must be accomplished quickly. Rather, it is an effective process for including and advancing women in our professional talent pool and in the life of the Jewish community.

#### **NEED FOR CLARITY**

To analyze adequately the concept of gender equality in the profession, several terms and issues must be addressed and clarified.

Are we concerned with all communal institutions and agencies, or just federations? And if the latter, do we mean all federations, or only the largest of those agencies? What is the context of the situation? Is gender inequality a problem particular to the Jewish community and, if not, does that make it more difficult or easier to solve? Where then can we look for positive examples of gender equality?

In considering reasonable expectations in the attainment of gender equality, we need look to the available talent pool and to the type of work provided in different institutional settings.

Who is actively seeking employment? What work settings or other factors compete with selecting a position in the Jewish community? Are there gender differentiations in typical career paths? Are the gender ratios of the talent pool constant at five, ten, and fifteen years following graduation from college or graduate school?

What are the rungs on the success ladder? Have qualified, credentialed women been on the Jewish job scene all along? Do the men in the profession come from within or without the Jewish communal service field? If from within, why are the talented women in the community not likewise involved in the pro-

fession?

#### **LEADERSHIP, INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS, AND REQUIRED PROFESSIONAL SKILLS**

Gender inequality appears more pervasive within large federations and less so in human service agencies. How do the different work settings, their volunteer leadership, and professional skill requirements affect gender equality?

The distinguishing characteristics of a federation are collection and dispensing of funds, policy controlled at the community level, and, in turn, considerable control over the growth and development of operating human service agencies in the community.

Federation boards are made up of “heavy hitters” who give large sums of money and expect to exercise a high degree of power. Their leadership style reflects the mores of corporations, and they prefer executives who are like themselves. On the other hand, boards of human service agencies make policy only for their own agency, play a limited role in the agency’s development (funding), and depend upon and often defer to the expertise of their professional staff and executive director. How important to attaining gender equality are these different settings and expectations? Does the setting explain much of the differential in gender equality?

#### **WHAT DO WE WANT?**

Are we ultimately seeking gender equality, where an equal number of women and men must be employed; or gender equity, where the ratio of men to women is important, but no quotas are proscribed; or egalitarian opportunity, where numbers or ratios are unimportant, provided that equal access is available to both women and men? And, in that search, are fixed numerical ratios appropriate? Should those ratios reflect the gender ratios of the talent pool?

Do we have reliable success models to emulate? Is the success in the sphere of

human service agencies more normative and realistic than the relative lack of success in those agencies that more closely resemble the corporate world? How do we account for the apparent differences?

**DOES SUCCESS HAVE A PRICE?**

Who will produce and/or donate funds needed to move toward gender equality? Who will control the outcome? And what will full access/advancement for women in the field of Jewish communal service portend?

Will such equality of access lead to gender "tipping," and a serious reduction of the number of qualified men who are interested in the profession? Do we have any existing models of gender equality (perhaps among the

human service agencies) that can give us insights into the long-term effects of a truly gender-neutral profession and organized Jewish community?

These are some of the important questions that require answers as we endeavor to bring about gender equality in the field of Jewish communal service and in the entire Jewish community it serves.

I have raised many questions in our search for a solution to gender inequity. But there is no question whatsoever that many talented, qualified women exist. We should, we must, draw on their skills and dedication in our efforts to revitalize the Jewish community.



*Janet Engelhart and Joseph S. Kaplan*

**CLOSING COMMENTS**

**DR. RON B. MEIER**

*JCSA President*

JCSA will continue its efforts to bring about gender equality in our field of service. We plan to devote a major portion of the Spring/Summer 2001 *Journal* edition to the issue. A videotape of the broadcast is being made available to agencies and communities to encourage follow-up activities. The Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University has been asked to analyze the responses to the questionnaires administered as part of the local programming component of the telecast, so we can gain greater insights into the current situation.

I would like to thank the 34 federations hosting the telecast in their communities, and

the 1,300 individuals who participated in the United States and Canada. Your willingness to confront the issue of gender equality, and to devote considerable time to the telecast, is to be commended. It is my hope that together we have taken an important step forward.

However, gender inequality requires more than a teleconference—it must have the continuing commitment of professional and volunteer leadership in all of our communities. It is encouraging that the first initiative being undertaken by the United Jewish Communities Trust for Jewish Philanthropy is focused on “Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community.” We hope that each of you will join with JCSA, the Trust, and others in this endeavor.

It is time to *act* to right a communal wrong.



*Dr. Ron B. Meier, President*